

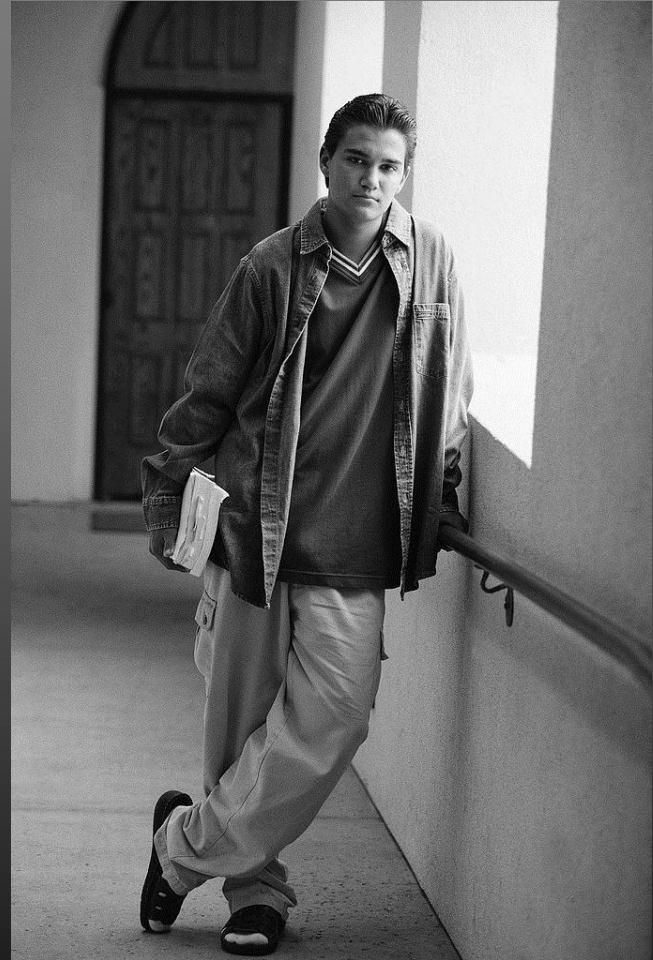
The background is a collage of several photographs. At the top left is a close-up of a young boy with light brown hair and blue eyes, looking upwards with his hands near his mouth. To his right is a close-up of a young girl with dark hair, looking off to the side. Further right is a close-up of a young boy with light brown hair, resting his chin on his hands. Below these are more close-ups of children's faces, including a girl with dark hair and a boy with light brown hair. At the bottom left is a photograph of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) standing outdoors with their arms raised in the air. At the bottom center is a photograph of two young boys, one in a red shirt and one in a grey shirt, smiling and hugging. At the bottom right is a close-up of a young girl with long brown hair, smiling. The title text is overlaid on the center of the collage.

# **Understanding Children's Mental Health Disorders and the Impact on Learning and Functioning**



# Introduction to Children's Mental Health

## An Overview of Depression



# Depression is Common

## Estimates of Incidence

1 % Preschoolers

2 % School age

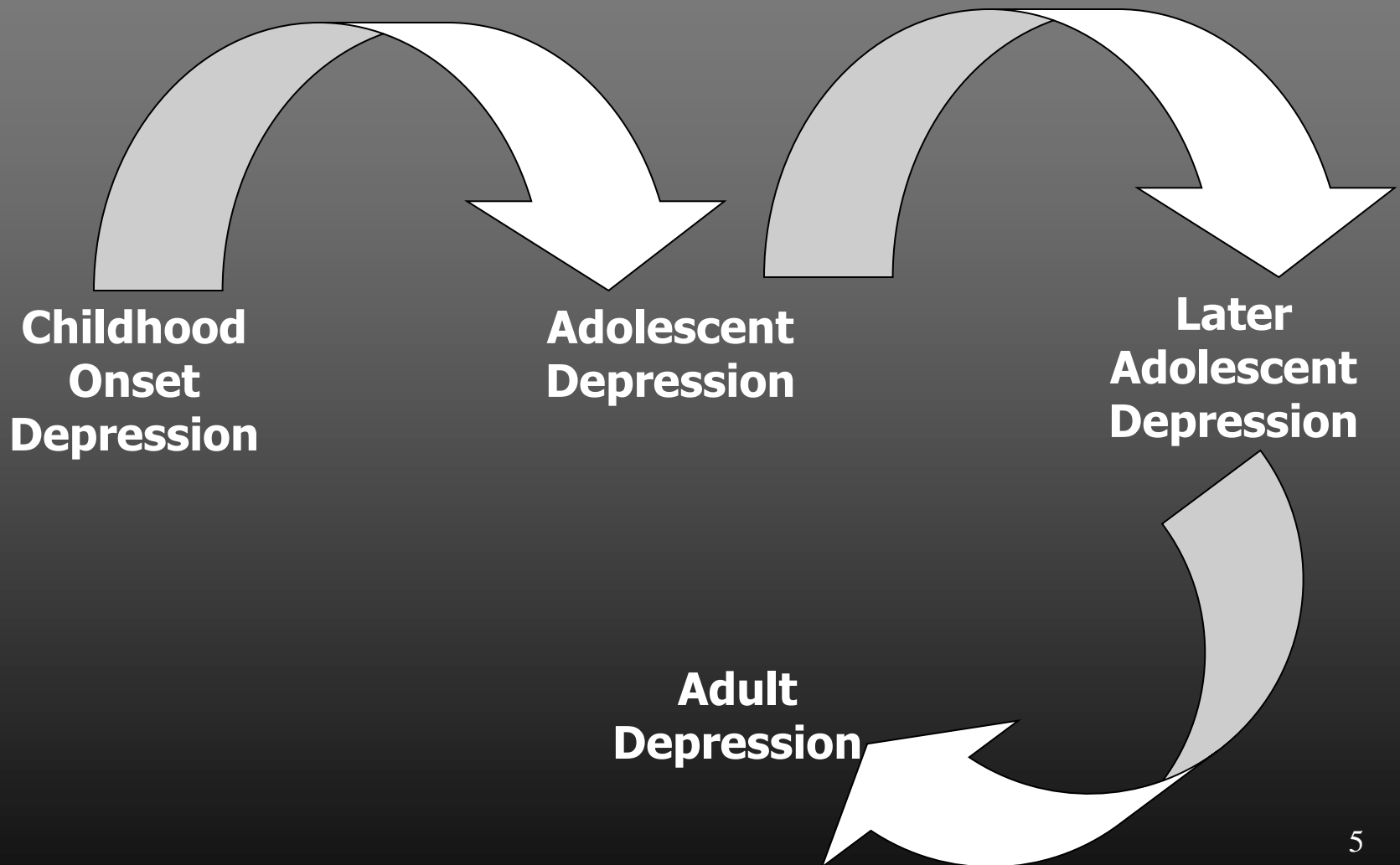
5 % Adolescents



20 % Lifetime **prevalence** during adolescence (parallels adult life time prevalence)

Birmaher et al., 2002

# Risk and Reoccurrence





# Depression is...

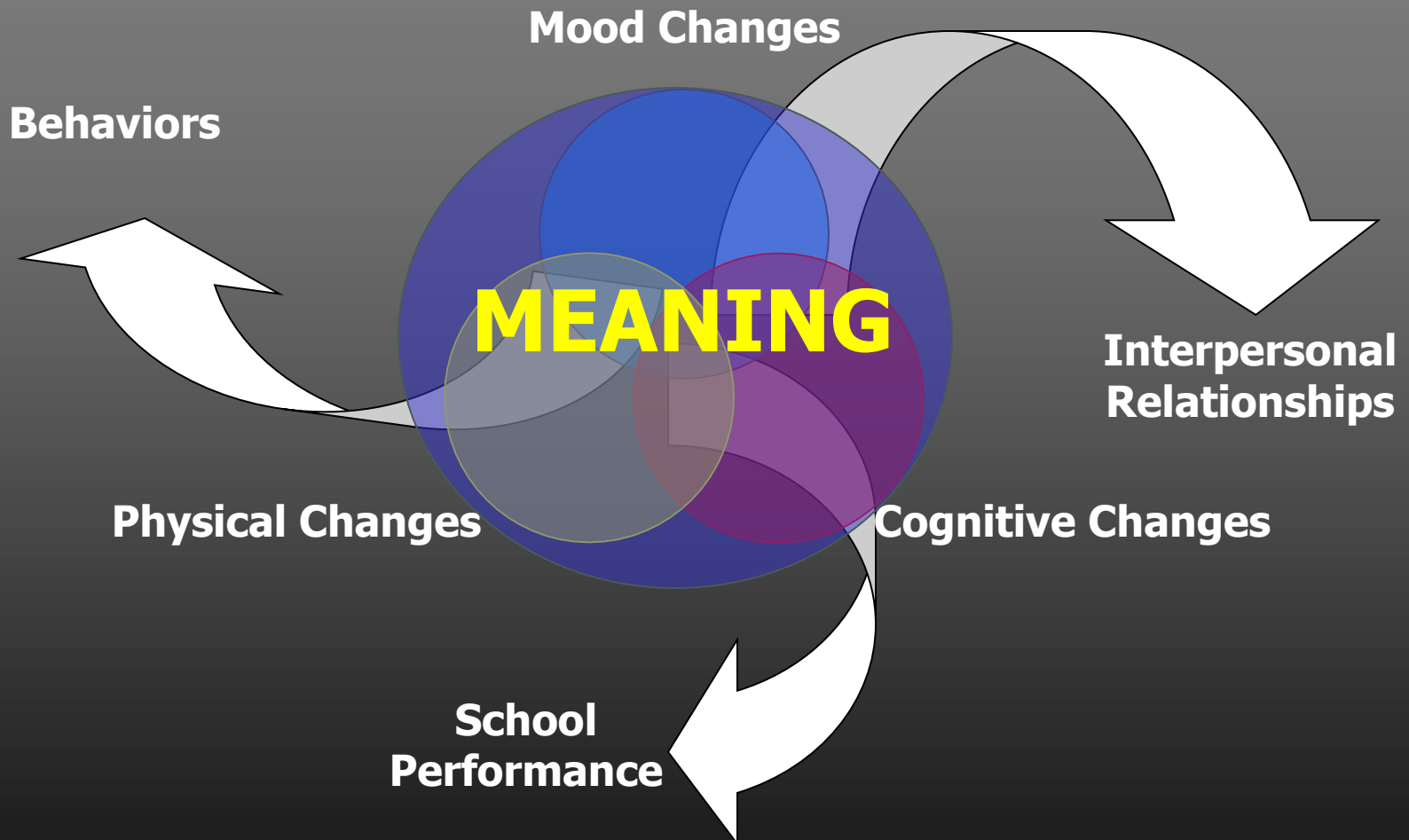
a mood disorder

a sleep and energy  
disorder

a thinking disorder



# Depression: Signs and Symptoms



# Mood Symptoms

Sad

Irritable

“mood swings”

Anhedonia

loss of interest

social withdrawal or  
isolation

boredom





# Physical Symptoms



## Sleep Difficulty

either with too much or too little sleep

## Fatigue

## Appetite Change

loss of appetite

increased carbohydrate craving

# Cognitive Symptoms



Difficulty  
concentrating

Increased  
distractibility and  
“spaciness”

Decreased  
attention and  
focus

# Cognitive Symptoms

Worried, ruminating  
thoughts

Worthlessness, low  
self-esteem, guilt

Distortions,  
misperceptions,  
misinterpretations



# Symptoms in Infants and Toddlers

## Mood

- Excessive whining
- Too little or too much crying
- Withdrawn from cuddling, being held
- Lack of interest in surroundings



# Symptoms in Infants and Toddlers

## Physical

- Sleep disturbance
- Sad or flat facial expression
- Little motor activity
- Failure to grow and thrive



# Depression Symptoms in Preschoolers



## Mood

- Frequent sadness
- Irritability
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Loss of pleasure in previously enjoyable activities



# Depression Symptoms in Preschoolers



## Physical

- Dulled, flat affect
- Frequent, unexplained stomachaches, headaches, and fatigue
- Overactivity or excessive restlessness

# Depression Symptoms in Preschoolers

## Cognitive

- Tendency to portray the world as sad or bleak
- Distracted, inattentive



# Depression Symptoms in School-Aged Children

## Mood

- Tearfulness
- Unprovoked hostility or aggression
- Refusal or reluctance to attend school
- Little interest in playing with others



# Depression Symptoms in School-Aged Children

## Physical

- Frequent and unexplained physical complaints
- Changes in sleep patterns



# Depression Symptoms in School-Aged Children

## Thinking

- Drop in grades
- Low self-esteem
- Excessive worrying
- Morbid or passive suicidal thoughts



# Depression Symptoms in Adolescents

## Mood

- Irritability
- Feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Boredom and “I don’t care”
- “Bad Attitude”
- Social isolation





# Depression Symptoms in Adolescents

## Physical

- Changes in sleep patterns
- Eating-related problems
- Increased motor restlessness
- Physical slowness
- Fatigue

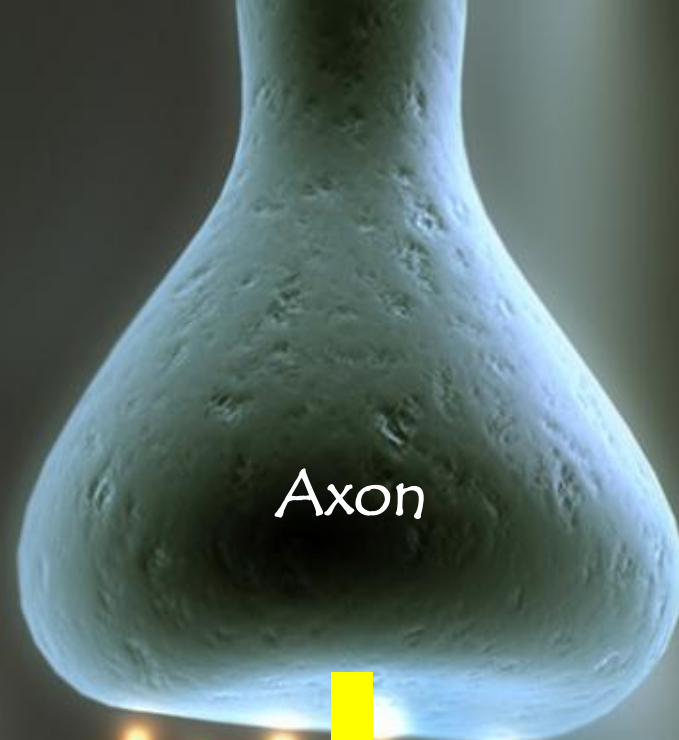


# Depression Symptoms in Adolescents

## Thinking

- Drop in school grades and/or conduct
- Low self-esteem
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Morbid or suicidal thoughts or actions





Axon



Neurotransmitters



Dendrite

# Top 3 Take Home Messages

Understand anhedonia

Thinking is distorted

Communication is inhibited



# Understand Anhedonia

May be the most debilitating aspect of depression

May be the most misunderstood and misinterpreted symptoms

the child with the “bad attitude”

Pay attention to your own internal responses of frustration and anger



# Thinking is Distorted

The depressed child's view is changed, different and distorted from your view

The child is often not aware of being depressed or aware of the changes to his or her thinking

Don't assume that the child knows and understands their own depression





# Communication is Inhibited

They lack the words to describe their feelings and internal experiences

This leads to further feelings of confusion and isolation

Don't rely on the depressed child to "tell you" what they feel or need



# Promoting Wellness in Depressed Children

Physical wellness

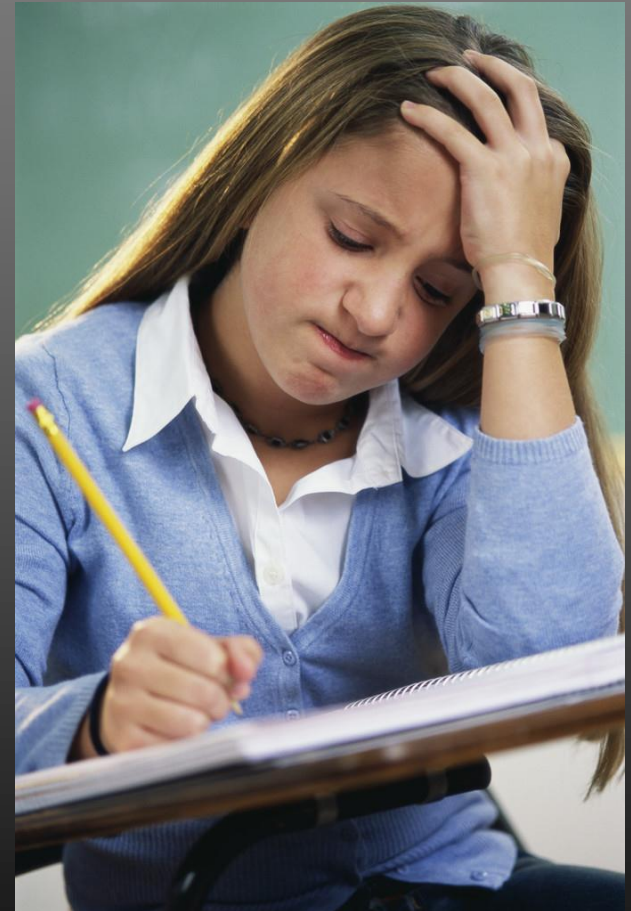
Social and  
emotional wellness

Accessing care



# Promoting Physical Wellness

- Regular Adequate Sleep
- Healthy Diet and Nutrition
- Regular Aerobic Exercise
- Not abusing chemicals including nicotine and caffeine



# Promoting Social and Emotional Wellness

- Relaxation and self-soothing activities
- Healthy support system including adults
- Engaging in fun and recreation
- Personal growth



# Accessing Care

- Primary care visits
- Mental health care visits
- Regular Counseling/ Therapy
- Medications







**The End**





For additional information and resources contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Services

Phone: (651) 431-2368

E-mail: [dhs.cmhs@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.cmhs@state.mn.us)

Website: <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>

Dr. L. Read Sulik, MD

Assistant Commissioner of Chemical and Mental  
Health Services.

# References

Birmaher, B. Arbelaez, C. Brent, D. (2002) *Course and Outcome of Child and Adolescent Major Depressive Disorder*. Child Adolesc Psychiatr Clin N Am July; 11(3) 619-37.